

REMARKS ON A PASSAGE  
FROM THE RIVER BALISE, in the  
BAY of HONDURAS, to MERIDA:  
THE CAPITAL of the PROVINCE  
of JUCATAN in the SPANISH  
WEST INDIES

By LIEUTENANT COOK

LONDON  
1769

\*

*A Facsimile of the Original  
with Perspective by Muriel Haas*



910.972'82  
COO-r



*F. Hecarillo  
México 1957*

**BIBLIOTECA LUIS GONZALEZ**

No. Adq. 61529

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Cook, James Lieutenant

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# R E M A R K S

## P A S S A G E

### FROM

The River BALISE, in the BAY of  
HONDURAS, to MERIDA;

### THE

Capital of the Province of JUCATAN,  
In the Spanish West Indies.

By Lieutenant C O O K,

Ordered by Sir WILLIAM BURNABY,  
Rear Admiral of the Red, in Jamaica;

With Dispatches to the Governor of the Province;

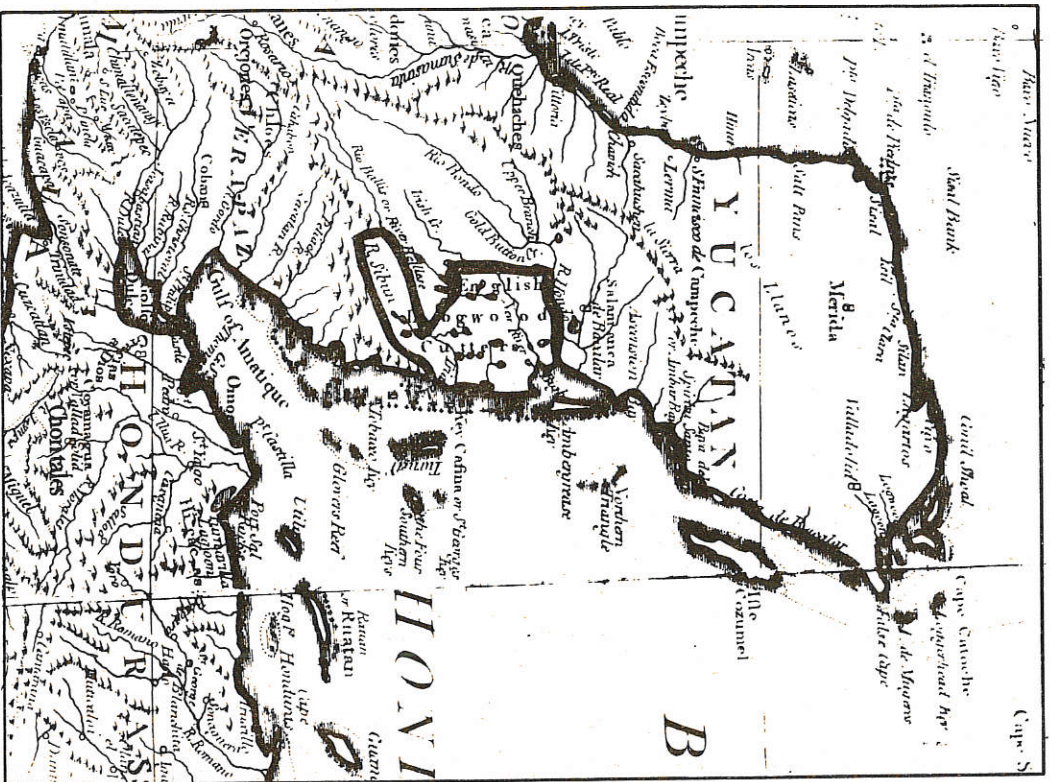
Relative to the

Logwood Cutters in the Bay of HONDURAS,

In February and March 1765.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. PARKER, the Upper Part of New Bond  
Street. M DCCCLXIX.



From "a new and complete map of the West Indies comprehending all the coasts and islands known by that name. By Mons<sup>r</sup> Danville; with several emendations and improvements. London . . . 1794."



# R E M A R K S, &c.



THE first part of this passage from the road of Balleise to Baccalar, is entirely by water; first coast-

ways to the entrance of the Rio Hondo, from thence through an arm of that river, that leads to three small Lagoons, till you arrive at the

B lake



[ 2 ]

lake of Bacalar, on whose banks the town and castle of St. Philips is situated. The distance from Baleise to the entrance of the Rio Hondo, is near thirty leagues, and in sailing has much the appearance of a straight or broad river, from the number of small island or quays, (as they are there called) that lay at about five or six leagues distance from the main, and parallel with it; both the islands and main are very flat, the former of which are for the most part covered with the Mangrove and palmeta trees; 'tis rare to see a beach, on either the main or the quays, for the Mangrove; the course up is about the N.N.W. and in general very shoaly, so much so at many places, that the *Flatts* which (the baymen use to carry their logwood) of about four or five feet draught

[ 3 ]

draught of water often ground, and in some particular places, raise the mud for a mile together. In short, the navigation on this part of the coast, from Baleise to the Rio Hondo, is as much a pilot's water for those boats, as the Thames is for ships from London to the Nore; the quays abound with Goannas, of which we shot several, going ashore for that purpose, and many Alligators lurk in the shoal water under the Mangrove bushes; we were accompanied by a master of a merchant ship (a lieutenant in the navy) in his long boat, partly out of compliment, and partly out of curiosity, to see the country and Bacalar; myself going into the Rio Hondo, with one Maud, one of the most considerable bay merchants, in one of his Flatts, which boats have a to-

[ 4 ]

lerable good cabin, and are schooner rigg'd. The entrance of the Rio Hondo is narrow, not more than a hundred yards over, or a half cables length, and is very deep, as from its name Hondo, signifying the same in the Spanish. About a quarter of a mile from the river's mouth, and open to the sea, on the north shore, is a look out, which is generally kept by a sergeant's, but sometimes a corporal's guard, which is weekly relieved from the garrison at Baccalar, from which, thro' the woods, it is distant only about five Spanish leagues, and from hence notice is given of whatever comes into the river to the commandant; this is called the lower look out. I must not here omit observing, how much it is the interest of the baymen (and which indeed they never fail to avail them-

[ 5 ]

themselves of) to be on good terms with the guards of these outposts; this my friend the merchant did, by making the sergeant and his guard very drunk, that he not only told him where they had discovered a good spot of logwood, but am persuaded, had he discovered a mine as rich as Porosi, he would have made no scruple of informing him of it; the officer of these commands, which is generally a sergeant, is besides this scene of jollity, often complimented with a piece of strip'd cotton, or some such light stuff, to make him a shirt, waistcoat or trousers, or perhaps a pair of European shoes for his wife. The little presents the commandant of Baccalar is not totally insensible of, and is often mean enough to be very jealous of, as it in a manner affects him, who is both

com-



[ 6 ]

commander and clothier; this Mr. Maud told me was one of the principal reasons of the late disturbances in the bay; the commandant of Baccalar being offended at this generosity of the English, hurting his privilege so much, as to make him persuade the late governor of the province, that it had never been customary for the English to cut wood in the Rio Hondo, and in doing which they had gone beyond the limits of the treaty of Paris.

Tho' the baymen consider their right by that treaty, from Cape Ca-touch to Cape Honduras; this was redressed by virtue of an order from the court of Spain, in favour of the cutters, in consequence of a remonstrance of our ministry in 1764, the duplicate of which order, together with

[ 7 ]

with Sir William's letter, I was engaged with.

In sailing from this to the next look out, you open a fine Lagoon on the south side of the river, about a league and a half from the lower look out; its called by the baymen the four mile Lagoon, but by the Spaniards the Zaho Mal; its of an oval form, about half a league in its shortest breadth, and pretty deep; in this Lagoon our companion, the master of the merchantman, lost his long boat, oversetting in a squall, in turning out of the Lagoon, to get into the river, where we had, to avoid the insects, musquetocs, &c. anchored for the night; the river hereabouts is so narrow, as scarce to

to afford room for the boom of the main-sail to gibe; they have a custom when they stop in the river on any occasion, to bush the Flatt, as they term it, which is no more than to buff round and drive her bowsprit and entangle it in the bush, which hides the Flatt, the stream being very weak.

The upper look out is from the river's mouth, about four Spanish leagues, and is situated at the entrance of a small creek (almost hid by the Mangroves) on the north shore of the river that opens to the passage to Bacalar; the course up the river to this place is about N. S. W. here also is a sergeant's guard; it was at this place the commandant  
of

Bacalar came in his *Pariagua*, to carry me up, having advice from the lower look out of my arrival in the river. — Here, on my coming on shore, I was saluted with four pateraroes, brought seemingly on purpose, the guard in every respect like the lower look out. — We were prevented the pleasure of returning this salute, by the loss of our long-boat, which the master had equipped with swivels for the purpose, as we were apprized of these compliments. This Creek is called the Cheeque, where, after the ceremony of signing vouchers for the commandants having admitted us into the river, &c. and a repast of chocolate, we all embarked on board  
C his



his Parriagua for Baccalar. The passage now becomes very intricate, through a very narrow channel, and rapid stream, that often throws the boat into the bushes. At the extremity of this narrow rivulet is a corporal's guard, open to the first of the three beforementioned Lagoons; the passages between which are so very difficult, that none but a well acquainted person could navigate one of those kind of boats of five or six inches draught to Baccalar; but I observed that the general course was about N. N. E. and the distance six or seven leagues. We arrived at Baccalar after seven or eight hours passage, about ten at night, during which nothing material happen'd, unless our being disturb'd

disturb'd by an Allegator, which our boat in its passage had awaked, as it lay on the water: our boat was frequently trackt by hand, thro' many of the channels, being very narrow and shoally.

Baccalar is a small, poor, straggling village, of ill-built huts, of stakes of the Palmeta-tree drove in the ground, plaistered with earth, and thatched with the leaves; in number not more than a hundred Spaniards and Indians, of the former they are most of the soldiers militia of the province. It has nothing to recommend it but its situation, which is extremely pleasant; being on the summit of a rising ground; on the north side

the lake is bounded by a pleasing prospect of woods, at an agreeable distance on the opposite shore.

The fort or castle of St. Phillips is also situated on the summit of this little hill, not more than a hundred yards from the shore of the Lake, is in form of a square, with salient angles: it faces to the four Cardinal Points; has four pieces of ordnance on each side, about twelve pounders, and one from each angle to cover the ditch, which is dry, and palisadoed, but no out-work: they have swivels mounted on the Marlons; not being invited to see it, cannot be very particular in my description of it: It is garrisoned by a company

pany of foot, and some few militia of the town, but so very undisciplined, and ill clothed, they have scarce the appearance of Falstaff's company of soldiers.

From hence a traveller must furnish himself with every necessary for a journey of three days, having a wilderness, as they call it, a wood of about thirty-four Spanish leagues to the first Indian town, call'd Chumhubut: it is also best to take your own liquor with you for the whole journey, as there is not any to be had in this country except Aquadent, which is very bad, scarce, and dear. As to the acquiring my necessaries, provisions, mules, indians, &c. I had



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no trouble with that, the commandant with whom I lived, during my residence in this town of three days, took all that on himself, for which I had no other trouble but to pay him.

Being equipped with every necessary, as mules, indians, interpreters, and hammocks of that country, to be carried in case of wearying, or to sleep in the night, you enter the wood, whose path in general is from fifteen to twenty feet wide; often interrupted by the fall of large trees; through which, however, a path is generally burnt by the first traveller, to admit a horse to pass, and is in general as well screened from

[ 15 ]

from the sun (by the meeting branches over head) as the Mall in St. James's Park. Here you see at every four or five leagues distance, a shed like what our common smith's, or farriers use to shoe their horses in, and is what the natives call a Rings-house: Being built by order of the governor, for the convenience of travelling; as there is not, as in Europe, houses of entertainment, or lodging, they answer the purpose very well in this climate, where you have your own provisions, and sleeping convenience with you; as they shelter from the sun and rain, and are always built near the water, either a Lagoon or branch of one, or what may be left from the rains: The

The woods consist chiefly of mahogany, cedar gopal, (of which they make a kind of gum elemi) the small and wild cotton, palmeta, and cocoa nuts, and many aloes, not much incommoded with underbrush: it is the swampy ground that abounds with the logwood, which the Spaniards call Palo Tinto. In travelling thro' the swamps it is very troublesome, the mules being knee deep, in the dry season, in a stiff blueish mud, often times nearly sticking fast, and the boughs of the logwood trees so low, as to oblige you to lay flat on the mules shoulders, whilst the animal is all that time plunging in endeavouring to extricate himself from the mire. Of game there is the quarm and

and curasoe birds, nearly as big as turkeys, and very fine food. Of beasts, wild deer and the warree\*, or musk hog. There are some wild beasts, as tygers, and some others, whose names I dont remember, but 'tis rare they are troublesome; travellers make no account of them. Parrots and Monkeys are also very numerous in the woods, as is common with those climates.

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\* The Warree is the Tajacu, or Musk Hog of Mexico; the Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences gives an account of this animal; it is very good food.



After passing the wilderness, the journey becomes more pleasant, always dining and sleeping in an Indian town; and in rather better houses than the former, they being staked closer, and plastered with earth: these are also built by the governor's order, for the same purpose as those in the woods. Here a chief of the Indians always resides, being obliged so to do, to be ready to furnish travellers with every thing necessary they may want; prepare their victuals; get them fresh mules and Indians, who travel at the order of this chief, who is a kind of alderman in the village; you pay only for the mules, and that very cheap. This Pazi-que, or Chief, always assembles about

about half a dozen of natives of the town, of both sexes. As soon as he discovers you coming into the town, by a particular shout, they prepare your victuals, wash your feet with warm water, and make every thing ready for your setting off again; the diet is generally fowls, eggs, or young pork; chocolate and maize bread, all very cheap.

From Chunhuhub to Merida is about fifty-seven Spanish leagues, and may be said to be entirely thro' the woods, tho' not so thick and lofty as the wilderness; and frequently as you approach the capital, opens to plantations; the path very serpentine, scarce ever

D 2      seeing

seeing two hundred yards before you; the soil a reddish clay; very rocky; and the country low, level, and badly water'd, not crossing one river in a journey of ninety-one leagues from Baccalar to Merida. There is in every town a publick well sunk with much difficulty, thro' a strata of hard rock, some of these are very deep; the water is in general hard, tho' not unpalatable. The people are healthy, and, as they say, remarkable for their longevity. From the wood to Merida you pass fourteen Indian towns; in every one of which is a kind of church, or place of worship: the one priest often officiates for three of these villages; riding from one to the other, having half

half way houses, or sheds, built for them by the poor Indians to secure them from rain; they appear to be superlatively ignorant, by what I could discover, thro' the inconvenience of an interpreter; of course can but ill impart with their small flock of knowledge to their flock, who they keep in the most obscure ignorance, and abject servility, shewing both by their adoration of such divines. They, however, behaved very polite and civil towards me, always waiting at the king's house to receive me; even when I have come in late at night, have invited me to come to sup with them, offer'd me lodging in their houses, complimented me with their best mule to



to proceed on my journey, and often a nosegay from the bosom of our virgin mother, not without hinting for a little present to the church; and some English rum for their poor congregation.

Merida is a handsome well built town, in form a square; the streets are spacious, parallel to each other, and cross at right angles, but have only the foot paths pav'd; it is built on a sandy soil; has a handsome arch'd gate way at the end of every street, next the country, but no gates hung: the houses are low built of stone, and white wash'd; the outside of which, in this country, has had effect on the eyes; it contains, as I was told, about twenty-four

four churches, a good cathedral, a convent of nuns, and a monastery of friars, of the order of St. Francis; two or three good squares; in the principal of which, and on the north side, resides the governor; and has the cathedral and bishop's palace on the east; the grand council house on the west; and houses of the principal inhabitants form the south side: there is but little appearance of commerce, or any mechanic art; very few public shops, but all appearing like people living on their own private fortune; and many are such; who live on the acquired wealth of their ancestors; while the indolence of many others prompts them to no industry or commerce; contented to

to live on the small profits of a plantation, and that cultivated by the Indians: but there is a small trade coast-ways to Campeachy, from the port of Sisal (which is distant only twelve leagues) in bees wax, leather, gopal, ebony, and logwood; but this a stranger cannot immediately discover. The revenues of the province to the crown of Spain are very considerable, arising mostly from the article of cotton, with which the woods abound.

The citadel, or castle, stands on a level spot of ground (as the country is in general); as you enter the town, from the eastward, it is of no consequence, being  
origi-

originally built to protect the Friars from the insolence of the natives: it at present incloses a monastery of the Franciscans beforementioned; it is in form an hexagon, with salient angles; with light pieces about four and six pounders mounted, some brass, some iron. The wall about ten yards high, has no ditch, or out-work. The governor's nephew is the commandant, who shew'd it me; 'tis by no means in a condition to defend itself against any foreign enemy that have artillery: a company of foot do duty here, and at the governor's house, but a troop of horse, which are part here, and the

E rest



rest at Campeachy, escort the governor when he goes out. I was credibly inform'd, there was not five hundred troops in the whole province.

The drefs of the Spaniards in this country is very light; the men wear a light linen waistcoat and trowsers, and drawers; the better sort, a satin one (scarce ever wearing a coat) with a white linnen cap, and a broad brim straw hat. The women, of the lower class, a single petticoat only, no stays, or any other cloathing above the waist, except their shift; their bonns no way concealed, but bare to

to the nipples of their breast; indeed, when they go out on a visit, even those who keep their calash, have no more than a silk scarf loosely flung over their shoulders; this is crimson satin, generally embroidered: they are for the most part pretty; some of them of very fair complexions; they wear their hair braided behind, and tied in two different bows, with pink ribbons, and are very free and unrevered. I would be understood here, with respect to the provincials only; the old Castilians (as they call themselves) they being such as hold offices under the crown, or those who come for

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the sake of trade; they dress as in Old Spain, and hold the other inhabitants in very little esteem.

The Jucatan Indians are a most willing, obliging, meek temper'd people; very laborious; of middling stature, and well featur'd: their hair strait and black, but cut short, except a lock on each side their temple, which they are constrained to wear as a badge of subjection to the Spanish monarchy. Their dress is a kind of short frock, reaching to the waist, and trowsers; a straw hat, and sandals: but when they travel, they proceed quite naked, except a cloth to

to hide their privities. They are very active and dexterous in the woods with their muschalls, an instrument something between a knife and a cleaver, with which they clear away the bush in the woods, dress their meat, and use it as an instrument of offence on occasion.

The women are, in general, short and thick set, with agreeable countenances; their hair black, which they generally wear club'd behind; and those near Merida, with a pink ribband: they go bare leg'd, with a short cotton petticoat, which they adorn about the



the bottom, with flowers of various colours, in needlework : as also their frocks, in the same manner, round the bosoms. These are always made of cotton, of their own spinning and weaving : the frock reaches only to the upper part of the petticoat, but this they throw off when employ'd on any domestick business, going naked to the waist.

The police of each of these towns, is managed by the following officers, whose titles I am better acquainted with than their office : they are always of the best repute, and fair character ;  
elderly

elderly men of the town, and have great respect shewn them by the Indians : they stand in rank as I here name them, the Cazique, Teniente, Alcaldi, and Fiscal ; who reside at what is called the king's house, and adjust all civil causes : they are distinguished by several badges ; the Alcaldi wearing a square blue cloth embroidered at the corners, hung to his left shoulder. The Teniente, a wand, with a cross at the top of it. The Fiscal wears a key, and a kind of cat with three tails, being by office both the prison-keeper, and executor of punishment. These badges of his offices  
he

he always wears to his waist, hung to a sash round his body. They have in each of these houses, a scrivener, or clerk, who minutes the arrival and departure of expresses going to or from Merida, or from any of the towns in the province.

Their towns are poor, mean huts, built with stakes of Palmetta, (which they chuse for their straitness) and thatched, with the leaves to the ground, resembling a large beehive. They have no upper room, no more than the provincial Spaniards, and like them, sleep all in their grass hammocks,  
as

as they are called, though they are made of the thready fibres of the leaves from the aloe-tree, in the same manner as hemp is got from the stalk; they just throw a cotton cloth over them; and when travelling, if night overtakes them, they sleep in these hammocks, hung between two trees; never neglecting however, to make a good wood fire close to their hammocks. Their diet is very simple, being no more than a maize cake, and a little pasoli to drink; a liquor made of the meal of the maize, left in water till it ferments, and grows sour: this generally they sweeten with honey,

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of



of which they find great plenty in the woods.

Their principal employment is the cultivation of the plantations ; they train their children to the practice of the bow and arrow ; and with which they kill their game, not being permitted to use fire arms.

## Perspective

By Muriel Haas

This *Remarks on a passage from the river Balize, in the Bay of Honduras, to Merida* is a rare little volume insofar as the number of extant copies goes. But it is rarer still, in respect to knowledge concerning its author, who modestly inscribes himself as "Lieutenant Cook"—no more, no less.

Biographers of the world-famous circumnavigator and explorer, Captain James Cook, have been wont to assign this work to him. However, by a careful study, it has been found by Arthur Kitson—who exposes his findings in the book *Captain James Cook "the Circumnavigator"*—that there were two persons named James Cook in the British navy at the same time: and that it was Lieutenant Cook and not his illustrious namesake, Captain Cook, who authored the *Remarks* . . . .

The fact that there were two men, bearing identical names, in His Majesty's service simultaneously, has led biographers and students of Captain James Cook into errors. Thus in the Everyman's Library edition of *Captain Cook's voyages of discovery*, edited by Ernest Rhys, we find the statement:<sup>1</sup>

"[Cook] received a commission on the 1st of April, 1760, and daily advanced in the career of glory."

1. Captain Cook's voyages of discovery. Ed. by Ernest Rhys. p. 5.



Later, in the same book, there is the information.<sup>2</sup>

"He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant of the royal navy on the 25th of May 1768."

As further verification of the latter date, we find:<sup>3</sup>

"The following were the principal officers:—

'Endeavour' Barquet  
James Cook, appointed Lieutenant Commander, 25th May 1768.

<sup>1</sup>Records, Admiralty, Whitehall."<sup>4</sup>

2. Ibid. p. 8.

3. Ibid. p. 9.

4. Kitson, Captain James Cook "The Circumnavigator." On p. 92, Mr. Kitson gives an entry from the "Commissions and Warrants Book" under the date of 25th May 1768: "Mr. James Cook (2nd) 1st Lieutenant *Endeavour* Bark. E. H., C. T., C. S."

Mr. Kitson goes on to explain: "The initials signify Edward Hawke, Charles Townshend, and Charles Saunders. The (2nd) evidently refers to the fact that there was already one James Cook, a Lieutenant in the Navy, viz., the former Master of the *Mercury*, and Third Lieutenant of the *Gosport*. On the same day as the entry of his appointment the Lords of the Admiralty wrote to Cook: 'Whereas we have appointed you First Lieutenant of His Majesty's Bark, the *Endeavour*, now at Deptford, and intend that you shall command her during her present intended voyage; and whereas we have ordered the said Bark to be fitted out and stored at that place for Foreign Service, manned with seventy men (agreeable to the scheme on the Back hereof) and victualled to Twelve months of all species of Provisions (for the said number of men at whole allowance) except Beer, of which she is to have only a proportion for one month and to be supplied with Brandy in lieu of the remainder: you are hereby required and directed to use the utmost despatch in getting her ready for the sea accordingly, and then

These statements are all based on facts, each set applicable to a James Cook, but two different men. The date of April 1, 1760, as the time of granting the commission, helps us, at any rate, to concur in Mr. Kitson's conclusions concerning the existence of two James Cooks when we read a letter from "James Cook," almost as definite a person as the well-known John Doe.

The letter<sup>5</sup> was written aboard His Majesty's Sloop *Wolf* at Penzance, December 5, 1766, and reads in part:

"May it please your Grace

Having been Honour'd by your Grace; with a Commission in the Navy in the year Sixty, and with your Graces Generous intentions of Promotion the Year following (which my being abroad and a ensuing Peace prevented) encouraged me to trouble your Grace with this. Wherein I am happy enough to inform your Grace that I have been hitherto Constantly employ'd; during the War in the Gosport the ship I was first Commission'd for since which in the Hazard and Wolf sloops station'd on the Coast of Cornwall: To this latter I was unexpectedly appoint'd when under sailing orders for Jamaica: when there I was order'd by Sr Wm falling down to Galleons Reach, take in her guns and gunners' stores at that place and proceed to the North for further orders.

<sup>1</sup>Given etc., 25th May 1768

<sup>2</sup>To Lieut. James Cook."

5. Ibid. bet. p. 26-27.



Burnaby (the Commanding officer at Jamaica) to Carry his Dispatches, relative to the Logwood Cutters in the Bay Honduras to the Governor of Jucatan at Merida; A Journey of near five hundred miles from the ships, in the Performance of which Service I was so far Fortunate to Please the Admiral that he honour'd me with a Recommendatory Letter to the Earl of Egmont; which for want of opportunity of a Personal Application to his Lordship, I inclos'd together with my Remarks on the Country Fortifications &c as desired by Sr W<sup>m</sup> to do . . . ."

The letter is signed "Your Grace's Much Oblig'd & Most Obedient Humble Servant at Command Jas Cook."

It can be seen clearly whence the year 1760 was obtained as the date of Captain Cook's lieutenancy commission! But if further proof be needed that the author of the letter is not Captain Cook, a survey of the latter's activities during this period of 1765, when the dispatches were carried, will throw light on the subject.

In November, 1764, Captain Cook was on his way to England, after having been employed in making charts, etc., off the Newfoundland coast. On his arrival in England, aboard his ship the *Grenville*, Cook suggested that she be sent up to Deptford yard. This was done, and while there the ship was overhauled. On March 25, 1765, Cook again left for Newfoundland, arriving at St. Lawrence Harbour on June 2, to recommence his work.

Cook, in command of the *Grenville*, was still engaged at this time in making scientific studies to advance nautical knowledge.

Constant references, completely unsupported by logic or data, are found in accounts about the circumnavigator, which place him off Jamaica station with Sir William Burnaby during February and March of 1765, when the passage from Belize to Merida was made. Taking into account the above circumstances surrounding Captain Cook, it will be seen that the only solution to the situation of apparently being two places at once, is not—as Shakespeare would have had it—the existence of twins, but of two unrelated contemporaries.

From the meager biographical source-material at hand, Kitson<sup>6</sup> has pieced together a scanty outline of Lieutenant James Cook's life, which I quote below:

" . . . There was a second James Cook in the service, who was appointed master of the *Mercury* under a warrant dated 15th May 1759, and entered on his duties immediately. He was with his ship at Sheerness on 12th July, at which time his namesake was with Saunders before Quebec. The *Mercury* returned with her master from New York and Boston, and for some time he was reported 'sick on shore', and on 11th June 1760 was superseded by John Emerton. Soon after this he was appointed third lieutenant of the *Gosport*, his commission bear-

6. Ibid. p. 26-27.



ing date 1st April 1760, that is, before he had left the *Mercury*. He was with the *Gosport* in Newfoundland in 1762 at the recapture of St. John's, when his ship was commanded by Captain Jervis, afterwards Lord St. Vincent, and it is quite possible that the two namesakes may have met at this time. In 1765 he was on board the *Wolf* on the Jamaica station, and was selected by Admiral Burnaby to carry dispatches to the Governor of Yucatan. This duty he successfully carried out, and in 1769 published a pamphlet describing his adventures during that journey. On his return to England from the West Indies he wrote the Duke of Newcastle asking for the command of a sloop; the letter is in the British Museum [already quoted above], having been included in a collection as one written by his celebrated namesake.

"In 1773 Cook was lieutenant on H. M. S. *Speedwell*, and on 2nd August he applied for a month's leave of absence on urgent private affairs as he had come into some property in the island of Jersey. Leave was granted. He never rose above the rank of lieutenant and his name disappears from the Navy list after July 1800."

The *raison d'être* of the dispatches carried by Cook was the trouble over the rights of logwood-cutting in the Bay of Honduras region. Four main forces, acting and reacting on one another, were: the Logwood Settlers, Yucatan, Great Britain, and Spain. To really understand the situation, a short history of each of the four at this epoch must be interpolated here.

Outlaw groups, preying on loaded ships, first made their appearance in the Antilles at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. Their origin is clouded in mystery; the fact remains that the many coastline coves in this region offered sheltered bases for their illegal activities. The value of logwood was accidentally discovered in 1655 by these pirate bands, who had been in the habit of using it for fire-wood. Finding that they could obtain 100 pounds per ton for it, privateers were fitted out, and their crews would seek to capture Spanish ships loaded with logwood. Privateering was suppressed by the Treaty of 1667, so the buccaneers began to cut the wood themselves, locating first in Cape Catoche, in the northeast corner of the Yucatecan peninsula. By 1670, it has been estimated, there were about 700 whites in these settlements, and Governor Modyford of Jamaica recommended at this time that recognition and help be given to the "new sucking colonies." This was, however, in direct contrast to the course pursued by Great Britain. From the beginning, the majority of logwood-cutters were British, but the mother country's attitude was one of non-recognition and of disregard of their existence. The War of Succession ended in 1713 with the Treaty of Utrecht, in which Lord Lexington sought to include a clause granting permission to cut logwood in the Bay of Honduras region only to those who obtained a license from Great Britain. However, this clause was not inserted, and the logwood settlements were excluded by implication



from the places recognized by the Treaty as belonging to England.

Spain and Great Britain fought diplomatic battles, and occasionally declared war on each other, but it was the small group of settlers who bore the brunt of the struggles. In 1722 Spain threatened to send all British logwood-cutters to the Mexican mines, and in 1728 peremptorily demanded evacuation of the region. It was probably in 1733 that the settlers were driven out of Belize by the Yucatecan governor Figueroa. A sack of Belize by Salcedo, another governor, is said to have taken place in 1737. During these years, however, the intervals between the attacks just related were filled with frequent raids on the Baymen by groups from Yucatan. In 1743 appears the first of oft-repeated requests for a Governor and protection. Again in 1745 the Baymen, reporting a disastrous onslaught in the New River district, made another plea for protection. Two years later, Belize was sacked. About the beginning of 1752 the Bay was once more taken. In 1754 the Baymen routed a Spanish force, but finally fled to Black River. The settlers returned to Belize in 1755, and the fortification of Belize by the English followed. From this time, Spain's protests were frequent, becoming vehement in 1760. The war, entered by Spain in 1761 and culminated by the Treaty of 1763, brought a climax to the constant struggle between Spain and the logwood colonists. A government for the latter was established by Sir William Burnaby. But

the strife did not cease, and the luckless Baymen, bastard children as it were, suffered many years more before their position became secure.<sup>7</sup>

These buccaneers, who later became the settlers, from the first had been enemy groups as far as Yucatan (a Spanish colony) was concerned. They frequently visited Yucatan, leaving unpleasant memories of their stay, in the days when their exploits were even less legal than logwood-cutting. No action against them was taken by the Yucatecan authorities, due to a lack of money to provide for adequate defense. Yucatan and the growing colonies became definite enemies during the War of Succession, the settlers declaring in support of England and the claims of the Austrian Archduke, while Yucatan sided with Spain and Philip V.

Harassed by the constant threat of, and actual raids by, the still-outlawed groups, Yucatan was also the victim of her governing authorities. A system of taxes and *repartimientos* kept the Indians in virtual serfdom, while the authorities lived in grandeur. It was indeed timely, then, that D. Juan Gomez de Parada, archbishop of Yucatan, should set out to reform the existing excesses. He convoked a congress to establish reforms, and in 1724 published an edict regulating the services of the Indians, suppressing the *repartimientos* and placing those who so desired at liberty to seek other work. It must be added that later governors and arch-

7. Archives of British Honduras, v. 1, p. 13-16.



bishops were irked by these reforms and again became cruel, domineering masters.

Although the exact date is disputed,<sup>8</sup> it was about 1733 that Belize was finally destroyed, under the leadership of D. Antonio de Figueroa y Silva Lazo of Yucatan. Later, settlers drifted back into the Rio Nuevo and Rio Hondo regions, but any attempt to drive them out was prevented by Spain's declaration of war on England in 1739. Yucatan became the battlefield of the struggle, until peace was declared in 1748.

Unsettled conditions, the destructive effects of the war, and the existence of former social evils combined to make Yucatan's lot anything but happy. It was no wonder that in November of 1761, after conditions had gone from bad to worse, that an Indian by the name of Jacinto found it comparatively easy to arouse his companions in misery to revolt. They gave the ruling caste some very uneasy moments, their assassinations in the middle of December ending the threat of revolution. Two years later D. Felipe Ramirez de Estenoz came to take his place in the long line of governors who had their turns to involve hapless Yucatan in more trouble. Since it was Estenoz who was the protagonist of the situation which necessitated Cook's carrying the dispatches, it is time to leave him and discuss Great Britain's role in the drama.

8. Ancona. *Historia de Yucatan desde la epoca mas remota hasta nuestros dias*, p. 415-17.

Great Britain's claims to the logwood regions were based on the Treaty of Madrid, 1670, which gave her sovereignty over all lands in the West Indies or in America then held and possessed by the British king and his subjects. This clause was interpreted by the English as sanction by Spain to the British logwood possessions, inhabited by settlers for several years previous to the treaty. Spain declared that this contention was invalid, the Queen issuing a *cedula* to the effect that unlicensed occupation and trade in the West Indies was piracy. The Lords of Trade in 1717, in answer to Spain's continued protests, declared that British subjects had claim to the forest settlements near Cape Caroché before 1667, therefore these logwood lands were included in the term "lands held and possessed by Great Britain in 1670." These arguments applied to the settlements in the Bay of Honduras as well as to those near Cape Caroché and Campeche. Prior to the war which commenced in October of 1739, a Treaty was sought, but rejected by Spain, since England insisted on a statement of her right to cut logwood. In 1750 Spain reiterated her right to the land and water of the West Indies, and in 1756 protested against the fortification and garrisoning of Belize.

England, during the Seven Years' War which began in 1756, endeavored to induce Spain to join her against France, offering, among other things, to evacuate the establishments made by her subjects in the Bay of Honduras since Octo-



ber, 1748. However, an alliance, the famed "*Pacto de familia*," had been made in August, 1761, between France, Naples, and Spain, for the purpose of protecting their mutual interests. Upon publication of this treaty, England and Spain declared war upon each other. Great Britain triumphed. Hostilities ended with the Treaty of 1763, which contained a clause permitting the British to cut logwood, but the settlement was recognized as within Spanish territory; all fortifications were to be demolished, and the settlers henceforth were to be under Spain's protection. Complications resulted, no limits having been designated in regard to the domain of the woodcutters. Governor Estenoz attempted to restrict the scope of their activities, in protest against which action Captain Cook carried the dispatches in question.

Diplomatic relationships between England and Spain during this period were so intertwined that to tell the story of one's actions is to involve the other. The difference in the two accounts lies in the point of view—either approval or disapproval of the turn of events. As has been pointed out, the non-Spanish logwood-cutters and those of the Bay of Honduras were regarded as pirates by Spain, since Spain had incontestable dominion over Yucatan and Honduras, according to the law of nations then recognized. Hence, any occupation of the territory by foreigners, without previous permission, was a violation of Spain's sovereignty. The attitude of Great Britain, which gave no govern-

mental sanction or official recognition to the settlements in the Bay of Honduras region, entrenched Spain more firmly in her rights. The Treaty of 1763 was a triumph for Great Britain; but for Spain, it only added to the many disasters of the war. In its fundamentals, the concession permitting the settlers to continue cutting wood was innocuous enough, since it gave Spain sovereignty over the colonists. But, as it so developed, an illicit contraband trade grew up between the English and Yucatan, extending as far as Chiapas, Tabasco, and even Mexico City. Protected by Great Britain and being on friendly terms with the Yucatecans, the settlers were enlarging their territory to the shores of Rio Hondo. Governor Estenoz, on December 29, 1763, ordered the settlers to evacuate the Rio Hondo district, and to take for their limits of activity the land lying between Rio Nuevo and Belize, and 20 leagues from the mouth of the sea to the west. Since these orders were backed by a show of force, five or six hundred settlers withdrew to Belize, and petitioned Governor Lyttelton of Jamaica<sup>9</sup> "to grant them such relief as their now distressed circumstances require."

On April 10, 1764,<sup>10</sup> a petition was sent to Sir William Burnaby, Knight Rear Admiral of the Red and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Squadron at Jamaica, requesting relief, protection, and restoration to their old

9. Archives of British Honduras, v. 1, p. 91-93.

10. Ibid. p. 93.



haunts. Notes were exchanged between Governors Estenoz and Lyttelton, and Joseph Maud, Chief Magistrate, whom Cook mentions. Diplomatic maneuvers involving authorities in the contending mother countries were carried on during 1764. Finally, on September 16, 1764,<sup>11</sup> Spain sent an order to Estenoz commanding him to allow British settlers to re-establish themselves in the logwood regions. Following this order, the British government decided to prepare to take effectual measures, and made plans to reinforce Sir William Burnaby's squadron. On September 28, 1764,<sup>12</sup> Lord Halifax sent an order to Governor Lyttelton with instructions to the Commander-in-Chief to send a ship every month or six weeks to inquire into the condition of the logwood-cutters. On February 24, 1765,<sup>13</sup> Admiral Burnaby sailed. He and his cohorts were still off Belize on March 26, 1765,<sup>14</sup> when Burnaby reported to Secretary Stephens that the inhabitants had been reinstated in Rowley's Bire, the New River, and Rio Hondo districts. Governor Estenoz, "the cause of the Disturbance," had died in the meantime. His successor "expressed the highest regard and esteem for His Britannic Majesty's Subjects, and assured us that he would endeavour . . . to manifest by his future conduct the truth of his assertion, by living in the strictest harmony with them."

11. *Ibid.* p. 97.
12. *Ibid.* p. 98.
13. *Ibid.* p. 99.
14. *Ibid.* p. 99.

Burnaby, therefore "ordered the Ships with the Troops which came with me back to Jamaica and am myself going to Pensacola . . ."<sup>15</sup>

It was during this stay of about a month in the Bay of Honduras district that Lieutenant Cook carried dispatches to Merida. The duplicate of "an order from the court of Spain" and "Sir William's letter" which Cook mentions as his specific charges, evidently are the Order of September 16, 1764, from Spain to the Governor of Yucatan commanding Estenoz to allow British settlers to re-establish themselves in the logwood regions, and Burnaby's letter to the Governor of Yucatan, dated September 20, 1764,<sup>16</sup> wherein he states that he will submit his interpretation of the treaty to the British home government.

While stationed in this territory, Sir William Burnaby, with the assistance of Lieutenant Cook, drew up for the settlers a code of laws, known as "Burnaby's Laws," and provided them with a constitution. It is interesting to note, in respect to Lieutenant Cook's part in the work, that Captain Cook is given the credit for this by many authorities,<sup>17</sup> due to the existence of the two gentlemen bearing the same name.

15. *Ibid.* p. 99.
16. *Ibid.* p. 97.
17. Gibbs. *British Honduras* . . . . p. 40.  
The *Handbook of Jamaica*. p. 33.  
Morris. *The colony of British Honduras* . . . . p. 3.  
Bridges. *The annals of Jamaica*. v. 2, p. 147.

It is truly unfortunate that, as is only human, praise and recognition have been given the more famous James Cook for work which was performed by his less illustrious contemporary. That Lieutenant Cook's accomplishments have been considered worthy of Captain Cook, however, is in itself a tribute to their quality. So now, 170 years later, we hope the Lieutenant will get his due.

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## MAP

A new and complete map of the West Indies comprehending all the coasts and islands known by that name. By Mons<sup>r</sup> Danville; with several emendations and improvements. London. Published by Laurie & Whittle, 12th May, 1794.





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